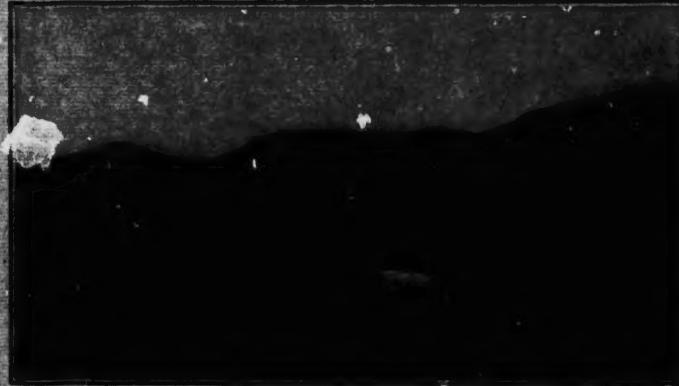


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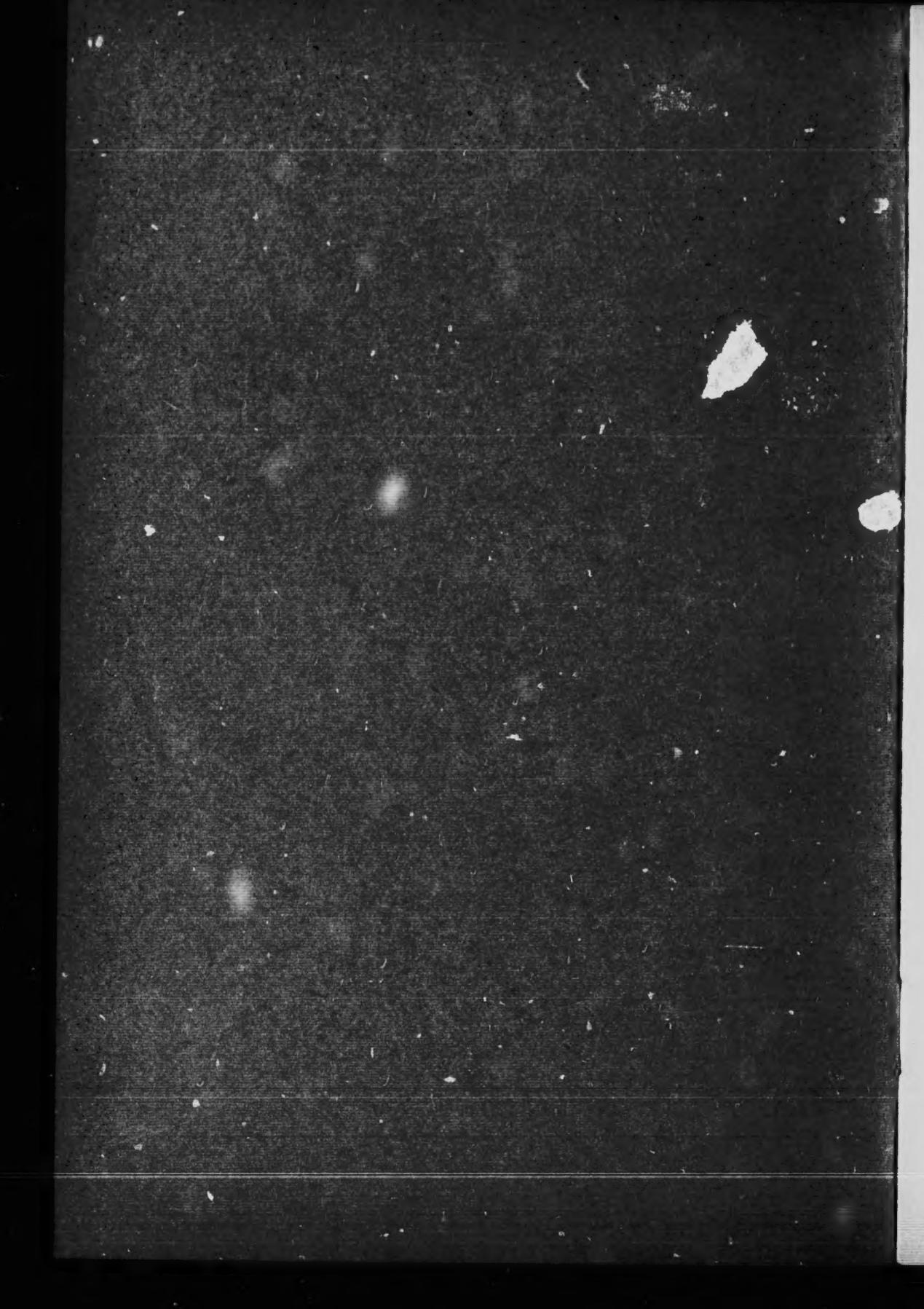


BRITISH COLUMBIA
LAND POLICY



SPEECH BY
The Hon. WILLIAM R. ROSS, K.C. Minister of Lands
14th February 1913

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Land Policy of British Columbia

Speech by the Hon. William R. Ross, K.C.,
Minister of Lands

FEBRUARY 14th, 1913

Hon. William R. Ross, K. C., Minister of Lands, in moving the second reading of the Bill to amend the Land Act, said: "I hope that this opportunity will afford me enough latitude to be able to discuss in a general way the business of the Lands Department during recent months. Before commencing to discuss it, however, I think that I may be permitted to express the hope that the honorable gentleman who occupies the position of leader of the Opposition in this House will deign to consider the policy which is being placed before the House, through the medium of the Minister of Lands, worthy of his serious attention rather than of his disregard, which latter he has seen fit to treat other Bills emanating from my Department.

"I do not propose to lecture the honorable gentleman, but it seems to me that since he has been, either by the arrogance of his position or by the fortuitous accident which places him there, placed in such a position, it is the first of his duties to pay serious attention to the serious business of the Government, and not to treat matters in the supercilious way that he treated the amendment to the Forests Act the other day.

"I think, sir, that although he claims to represent only one class of the country, it is up to him, for the present at least, as leader of the Opposition, to forget the perpetual grouch which he has against the world at large, and to take some part in our deliberations, so that if the policy contained in this Bill is not to his liking, we will have the benefit of his attention.

"Since I first took office in October, 1910, no very radical changes have been attempted with reference to the general land

law of the Province, but rather we have, during the two sessions that have elapsed since then, contented ourselves with the amendments which might from time to time be required for the purpose of rounding out our administration, and bringing the business up to date. Consequently, I will not have much to say with reference to the legislation of the past, but would like to make some remarks about the Department before proceeding to discuss the proposals now before the House.

"Since I first took office in October, 1910, no very radical change had been placed upon the statute book in connection with the workings of the Land Act, and we have each year contented ourselves with maintaining the policy of that Act and of only securing from the Legislature such further amendments each year as would seem to be necessary to meet the different departmental situations which arose from time to time under the Act. Consequently, I have not much to say with regard to the legislation of the past itself, but would like to make some remarks as to the condition of the Department before proceeding to a discussion of the principles of the amending act now before the House.

"In the latter part of 1910, as before stated, I was honored with the confidence of our present leader, and asked to assume the direction of the destiny of the Lands Department; and, I must confess, sir, that while I appreciated the honor, as well as the distinction such an appointment must of necessity give, both to the electors, as well as to the electoral district which it is my privilege to represent in this House, I had never previously approached an undertaking of such magnitude, and I am frank to say I had many misgivings as to the probable outcome.

BUSINESS-LIKE ADMINISTRATION

"In the course of dealing with the conditions of affairs in the Lands Department it may be necessary for me to make some comparisons, and, in doing so, I wish to be distinctly understood that in so drawing comparisons I do not do so with the idea, or wish, that they should be in any way invidious; nor do I intend that they shall be taken as an even indirect reflection on my predecessors in office or any of them. The fact remains, and I attribute it to the business-like and progressive administration which has been given to this Province by Sir Richard McBride and his Government since the year 1903 and continued up to the present, that in the year 1910 there commenced a tremendous increase in the volume of general business transacted by the Department, which very much outran the record of any previous year, and the Department, while maintaining the public business up to a certain

standard, was not able, through the fact of being undermanned, to carry out its business as promptly or as efficiently as in former times when the volume of work had been a great deal less.

"In 1910, as before stated, the first large work in the general development of the business of the Department was undertaken by my friend and colleague, the present Minister of Finance and Agriculture, in the creation of a Water Branch and its organization as a separate entity of the Department, a work which was continued to the commencement of my administration.

"During and previous to this time, the Forestry Commission had been holding its meetings and pursuing its investigations into forestry matters, and, in 1912, the Forest Branch was created, together with all the details of organization which that work involved, and which I had the privilege of explaining and commenting on quite recently during the present session of the House, and at greater length when introducing the Bill last year.

SURVEYS BRANCH IMPROVED

"It was also necessary to bring the Surveys Branch of the Department up to a level necessary to complete the arrears of business and to maintain it at a proper standard.

"These operations, while involving a great amount of organization work and other labor, besides the necessary work involved in departmental routine, have well justified their creation, and experience has shown that the incidence of their commencement and enlargement was well advised, and in point of time was undertaken none too soon.

"Certain progress having been made in these important departments, it was found necessary in the public interest to make other investigations, and further changes were consequently undertaken for the purpose of rearranging our clerical and correspondence system, so as to bring it in line with the conduct of modern institutions of a similar nature.

"For this purpose I investigated, through the medium of Mr. J. M. Roberts, head of the Correspondence and Filing Branch of the Department of the Interior at Ottawa, the methods in vogue there; and, through the courtesy of the Hon. Robert Rogers, then Minister of the Interior at Ottawa, Mr. Roberts was loaned to me for five or six months for the purpose of improving our system, and in this way I was able to introduce a general filing and correspondence system into the Department which brings each branch into harmony with the rest, and at the same time enables us to do away with many features of our work which had, through the

course of time, become more or less obsolete; and I think, as a result of this work, I am able to claim, but do so, sir, with all the modesty I possess, that the general business of the Lands Department of the Province of British Columbia is now transacted as efficiently and as expeditiously as that of any other public department either in this Dominion or on this continent.

EXPANSION OF BUSINESS

"I found, sir, that the general expansion of business and the activity in all its lines reflected itself in a most striking way in the operation of the work of the Lands Department, and that there were many lines of duty, which, by virtue of the previous system, my very able Deputy Minister was supposed to administer; but, as these lines of duty had each so increased in volume, it was impossible either for him or for any other individual to carry them to their proper conclusion, relying on his individual efforts alone, without impairing to some extent his general efficiency.

"Consequently, sir, it was considered advisable to create a new branch of the Department, which we call the Inspection Branch, for the purpose of taking over some of the more pressing duties of the Deputy Minister, and for the purpose of developing other lines of business which had presented themselves. This branch has particularly to do with the inspection of the pre-emption provisions of the Land Act, and of townsite lands and interests acquired by the Government in townsites, as well as many other matters of more or less relative importance.

PRE-EMPTION INSPECTIONS BRANCH

"The branch was placed under the direction of Mr. Henry Cathcart, who was then chief clerk, and had been for some twenty-eight or thirty years an active and very able officer of the Lands Department. As we were anticipating some radical departures from the existing provisions of the Land Act at this session, it was considered inadvisable to proceed with the same degree of activity in the supervision of pre-emptions as we are proposing to do during 1913; yet, such examinations as Mr. Cathcart was able to make in the field of pre-emption conditions revealed the fact that the existing system did not bring about either the volume of settlement or the degree of cultivation, as a result of that settlement, which the Government of the day thought best in the public interest to have, and that many pre-emptions were taken up for purposes of speculation rather than active development.

"During the season of 1913 we propose to develop this branch of the Department so that at all times we may be in touch with conditions as they exist, and, by getting into personal contact with the residents of the country we are of the opinion that much good will result to the public as a consequence.

INFORMATION FOR SETTLERS

"As a corollary of the Inspection Branch, we have actively undertaken the work of securing for departmental purposes as much information as it is possible to acquire about our public lands; and we have the means, through the medium of our survey parties, pre-emption inspectors and foresters, to quickly assemble much useful information, and at the same time to disseminate through the medium of maps and pamphlets such details as may be most in demand. This work has been placed under the direction of Mr. J. Gordo. Smith, a very able young man, who has had a large experience in the class of work involved, and I am satisfied that as a result of his operations any cause for criticism in that respect which may have hitherto existed will be removed.

"These are some of the things which we are doing, but I am entirely too modest, sir, to claim that at any time the Lands Department will be able to reach that state which is called 'perfect.' I am hopeful, nevertheless, that notwithstanding the many difficulties which present themselves from time to time, we may be able very much to improve the administration as the necessity for the same is apparent.

"It will be within the knowledge of members of this House that from time to time criticisms are made that we are not able to furnish information desired by the settler, and those criticisms may be more or less true at times, but I submit, sir, it is purely a question of standard.

"For the most part the enquiries which come to us directed by men who have been accustomed to acquire their information in the Provinces which lie to the east of us, and, as is well known, the conditions which prevail there are vastly different from those which exist in our mountainous country. In those Provinces, on account of the level nature of the land, and also on account of having had the vast resources of the Dominion treasury to draw upon for the prosecution of scientific systems of survey, and to carry the same to final completion long before the footfall of the first settler was heard, they had a plain road to travel. We, on the other hand, until recent years, have been a struggling Province, and it has not been possible to take advantage of a large expenditure in the carrying out of our surveys without impairing

the degree of work in other lines which the immediate circumstances seemed to demand.

"Then again, in this Province, the granting of mineral rights, and coal and petroleum rights, and the necessity of doing so without survey at the time, has to a great extent fixed the conditions under which this Government was obliged, and still continues to be obliged, to carry on its work. I am free to confess, sir, that if this administration were commencing anew instead of stepping into a system of some thirty or forty years' establishment, with the means now at our disposal, we would be able to lay out the Province according to a more scientific system of surveys than we now enjoy, and we should have been able as well to have had areas of land surveyed long before the demand for the same might have arisen.

REPORT OF DEPARTMENT

"During the last year we have had compiled a report upon the business of the Department, and I hope within the course of the next week or ten days to lay it upon the table. It is a volume consisting of some three or four hundred pages outlining the year's work in full detail, and I trust, sir, that a perusal of it will convince my honorable friend from Newcastle that although we may fall short of his standards in the matter of extemporaneous speaking, yet when it comes to actual work the officials of the Lands Department are 'on the job.'

"During the past year we have created, as an adjunct of the surveys branch, a mapping department or geographical section which is in the charge of Mr. Aitken, a gentlemen of wide experience in that work, and I can perhaps pay no better tribute to the quality of the work which he turns out than to refer you to the new map of the Province which has been laid upon the desks of honorable members of this House. I may say, sir, that this mapping department besides being manned with officials who are experts in that line of business, is fully equipped for the work in a modern way, and we are now able to undertake the process not only of compiling all the maps that are necessary from time to time in the administration of the Lands Department, but also to do whatever work of that nature may arise in the other branches of the public service.

"While, sir, I take particular pride in the map to which I have just made reference, it does not represent, by any means, the total amount of the activities of the branch for the current year, as other useful maps of various sections of the Province have been compiled and distributed, and I think, sir, in that respect, we have also made very marked and useful progress.

"We have also, too, a couple of the very latest electric blue printing machines, where all blue prints for the Lands Department as well as the Works Department, are expeditiously turned out. Speaking, generally, sir, the routine work of the Department of Lands may be said to be up to date.

"I shall now turn, sir, to a consideration of the principles involved in the amendments to the Bill which is now before the House, and in this connection, sir, let me say it is a pleasure, as well as a privilege, to move the second reading of this Bill, believing, as I do, that it will accomplish a great deal in the settlement of our Provincial lands, a matter that has received the earnest consideration of this and preceding administrations.

FREE PRE-EMPTIONS

"As the members of this House will have appreciated, the most striking feature of the measure is the intention to present to the intending settler an absolutely free grant of his homestead or pre-emption, the only charge in connection therewith being the entry fee of \$2.00 and a fee of \$10.00, which becomes payable upon application for the Crown grant. I may say the administration has had under consideration for some time the advisability of making free grants to settlers, and, I am confident, once this policy is decided upon, it will have the effect of focusing British Columbia and its possibilities upon the minds of all who are looking for an opportunity to create homes for themselves in this land of promise.

"Reduced to bare figures, the proposal of the Bill is to offer a bonus of \$200 to each and every settler who will make a land entry and secure title under the provisions of the Act. It relieves the pre-emptor from the payment of a first charge of \$1 per acre, as well as the payment of the usual survey fee where the lands have been surveyed by the Government.

"This, however, is but one way of looking at the proposition; as compared with the man who elects to purchase direct from the Crown, the settler will have an advantage of at least \$1,000. This is really the surplus value which the Bill places upon the settler's three years' residence, aside from the improvements he will make upon the lands within such a period.

AN ATTRACTIVE PROSPECT

"With a prospect so attractive, I do not think I am in the least over-confident when I predict that British Columbia will be successful in drawing to her agricultural lands the most desirable class of farmers, especially so as the offer which it is proposed

to make comes at the time when so much of the Province is at the point of being opened up by the railways approaching completion, or in the course of construction.

"I would like, Mr. Speaker, while I am on this subject, to refer again, in a very brief manner, to one form of criticism which I previously touched upon, which is directed against the Department over which I have the honor to preside. It is the statement so often heard that the Government has no land policy, and that nothing is being done to promote the settlement of our lands. I do not propose to scold, Mr. Speaker, but I think no harm can be done by looking the matter fairly in the face and asking the members of this House to do the same.

"To my mind, there are several manifest reasons which account for the comparatively slow progress that has been made in the settlement of the lands of the Province.

"The lack of a proper system of surveys is an important factor, and I will touch on this phase of the case later. In the first summing up, British Columbia is not an agricultural Province alone—not in the sense of the prairie provinces to the east, where the lands lie practically ready for the plow; and much of its area suitable for agricultural purposes has been more or less isolated by lack of transportation; but behind this it must be admitted that its people are not farmers.

"They may know a great deal about farming and clearing, dearly bought in the clearing and preparation of farms in other portions of the Dominion, but they have turned their backs on farming as a calling, and it is not from their ranks that the men will be recruited who will people and cultivate the immense stretches of the Province which will soon be rendered accessible.

"An impartial review of the history of British Columbia's development will disclose that its earliest settlers were speculators rather than farmers. Their first lure was the placer gold of the streams, and, for those who followed after them, quartz and coal mining, and later the exploitation of the timber values and real estate development, took their place. Each of these gave promise of quicker returns than attempting to cut farms out of the forests, and the early settlers not having emigrated on account of either health or scenery, gave their attention to matters which promised earliest results.

SATISFACTORY PROGRESS MADE

"It is true that in the southern portion of the Province, to which the advantage of railway communication came first, very satisfactory progress has been made along agricultural lines; but,

in relation to the area of the Province, that under cultivation is comparatively small; and the fact remains that in foodstuffs we do not produce anything like a sufficient quantity for our own requirements. The circumstance also that the administration of the mining and timber resources was in a great measure forced ahead of agricultural development has undoubtedly had its effect in locking up lands which otherwise would have been available for settlement.

"This is especially true of the Coast sections and of Vancouver Island. It does not, however, lay the ground for an indictment of this or of any previous Government. It simply points to the necessity of preparing our country by establishing transfer facilities, roads, trails, etc., so that we can reasonably expect settlement.

ADMINISTRATION OF FOREST AREAS

"The policy which some unthinking persons set out to condemn is the administration of forest areas with an eye to their timber values. Those who would blame the Government of the day, and the Governments that have gone before, for placing these lands under timber lease and license, force themselves into the position that the timber values should be sacrificed on the fires of land clearing operations in order that settlement might be forced. In certain portions of the Province also—particularly on Graham Island—the activities of those seeking to develop the coal resources have run counter to the intending settler in the closing of other areas.

"Such antagonism, however, as has presented itself, is, perhaps, more fancied than real, and will be confined to the initial efforts of the lumbermen and the miner in the direction of the development of the natural resources they have selected for their attention, as in the end their success will spell greater success for the farmer, and the toll which the Province will take for the utilization of its timber and its minerals will be available for the construction of roads and schools—if, indeed, it does not have the effect, as some optimistic persons think, of putting the tax collector out of business entirely. Those who are inclined to find fault with this, talk as if the Province was at the end of its string instead of at the commencement of its development.

"You will understand what I mean when I tell you that all the surveyed lands in the Province, including timber holdings, aggregate less than 19,000,000 acres, and that close upon 50 per cent. of this acreage has been surveyed within the past four years. During this period, the surveys made by the Lands Department

have exceeded two and one-half million acres, and, after segregating the lands set aside for university endowment, we have upwards of one and three-quarter million acres reserved for, or that can be rendered available for, the settler.

FIGURES IMPRESS CRITICS

"I mention these figures merely to impress upon the critics that notwithstanding whatever mistakes may have been wrought, British Columbia is still in the making, and that nothing which has happened in the past need prevent it from becoming the most important Province in the Dominion in point of wealth and the contentment of its people. The point to keep in mind when undertaking a review of Provincial affairs is that the Province is just beginning to grow, and, when the word goes forth that British Columbia offers to everyone who is prepared to receive it a free home within reasonable reach of railway facilities, I am confident we will see greater growth in two years than we have had in the past ten years.

"While on the subject of growth, I think it is worthy of note that during the past year, due in a very great measure to the extensive survey programme which had been carried out, a gain of 50 per cent. was made in the total number of pre-emptions existing. There is another important feature of the Bill to which I would like to direct the attention of members of this House, and that is the one giving the Executive Council power to determine the size of pre-emption claims within areas that have been surveyed. As you are all aware, the conditions vary greatly throughout the Province.

SIZE OF PRE-EMPTION CLAIMS

"In former days this difference was respected, and to the east of the Cascade range of mountains the pre-emptor was allowed a pre-emption of 320 acres, while, on the west of the range, the area was fixed at 160 acres. During the year, I have made a canvass of the local commissioners for the purpose of ascertaining their views as to the size of pre-emptions in the territory administered by them, and, having regard doubtless to the varying conditions, there was a very wide divergence in their recommendations.

"Some of the commissioners were of the opinion that pre-emptions should be reduced to forty acres, while others recommended that the size should be increased to 320 acres. It is manifest that the man who undertakes fruit-raising will not require the same acreage as the man who contemplates raising

II

stock, or attempting dry farming. To meet the situation, section 2 of the Bill before the House has been drafted, but the application of the section will require the survey by the Department of the lands to be administered under it.

"In sections close to markets, where small holdings may be considered advisable, the lands may be surveyed and opened to entry accordingly; and in grazing and semi-arid sections the area may be increased beyond the maximum of 160 acres fixed in the general provisions of the Act. This, in my opinion, is a better way of meeting the situation than of attempting to arbitrarily fix the size of pre-emptions in the various land districts. The clause, as you will note, is not altogether new, but, as it is proposed to amend it, it will meet the case.

FREE PRE-EMPTION POLICY

"Having decided upon the policy of free pre-emptions, it became necessary to consider the matters of residence and improvements. Under the present Act, the pre-emptor upon completing two years' residence and placing improvements on the land to the extent of not less than \$2.50 per acre became entitled to secure his Crown grant with the payment of one dollar per acre.

"The changes submitted in the present Bill call for three years' residence and improvements to the value of \$5 per acre, with the further proviso that the improvements shall include the bringing under cultivation of at least five acres. In my opinion, the pre-emptor, who is bona-fide in his intentions, will not object to the additional year's residence, and in view of the substitution of a free grant for a purchase, the increased value in improvements, including the bringing of five acres under cultivation, will no doubt be accepted as reasonable.

"The amendment contemplated by section 4 of the Bill makes the granting of any pre-emption record permissive; the Minister being given the discretion of refusing any record, the granting of which he does not consider to be in the public interest. There are many instances in which the Minister should have discretion of this kind which it would be difficult to make specific provision for in the statute. The idea is not new, as you will see by reference to the present Act similar discretion is given the Minister in the matter of land sales, and there is no reason why like provision should not be made in the matter of the issuance of pre-emption records.

"Section 6 of the Bill deals with the procedure in the matter of the cancellation of sales with respect to which the purchasers

are in arrears. As the Act stands, the giving of any notice to persons in arrear is optional, but, with the provision for the giving of notice, such notice might be expected; and, in the event of any general cancellation being decided upon, there is no reason why notice should not be given, especially in view of the fact that it might have the effect of inducing those in arrear to protect themselves by completing payment. As the Act stands, twelve months is suggested, and the amendment proposed in the Bill simply reduces this from twelve to six months. Of the two remaining sections in the Bill, one deals with an amendment in the form of Crown grant so as to reserve natural gas with the reservation of coal and petroleum.

ADMINISTRATION OF NATURAL GAS

"It has been decided to administer natural gas under the Coal and Petroleum Act, as it is generally discovered by the prospecting methods followed in the searching for coal and petroleum. The change that is now proposed will not affect the form of grant issued for any lands, the right to which is acquired prior to the passage of the present Bill.

"Section 8 of the Bill gives British Columbia land surveyors authority to take any declarations authorized by the Land Act, in addition to the various other persons already authorized. This change is being made for the convenience of pre-emptors and others in unsettled portions of the Province, and will enable them, in many instances, to perfect title papers while the surveyors are in their vicinity.

"I have endeavored, Mr. Speaker, to run over the several sections of this Bill and explain briefly their meaning; and, as I have already stated, I am convinced the measure now before you will expedite, in many ways, the settlement of our lands. I do not wish to be understood as intimating that this short Bill covers everything in connection with this very important question, which has held the attention of the Government, as well as the attention of the various boards of trade and development leagues, for some time; but it represents the length the Government is prepared to go, after considering the many and varied suggestions which have been submitted.

SUGGESTIONS OFFERED

"While I am on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I desire to thank the several boards of trade and development leagues who have interested themselves in this matter, and to assure them that, while the Government may not have felt warranted in introducing all

of their recommendations at the present time, they have nevertheless received most careful consideration, and it is not improbable that some of the others may be incorporated into the statute at a future date. One suggestion that found much favor with the public bodies to which I have already referred, was the recommendation calling for the clearing of a certain portion of the settler's land—especially in the timbered sections of the Province—and adding the cost of the same to the price to be paid by the settler.

"This suggestion has much to commend it, and I may say I have had the subject under my personal investigation for some time; but I have not yet satisfied myself that the scheme should be undertaken, or at any rate, not at this time. While the desirability of such a programme may be admitted, having regard to the portions of the Province more heavily wooded, it has been decided, for the present, to give first attention to the settlement of other lands not requiring such heavy initial expenditure—lands in strictly agricultural sections of the Province, where railway connections will make possible settled communities, and where the settlers will have roads, schools, post offices, and other advantages which cannot be assured or expected in isolated sections.

CLEARING OF LANDS

"It may be, Mr. Speaker, that the Government will be required to face the question of the clearing of lands—more especially of the logged over lands that are surrendered out of timber leases and licences. The question does not loom very large at present because the aggregate acreage of such lands is not very great, but it is a class of land that will call for increased attention when our mills increase their output.

"As you know, these lands fall into reserve upon the termination of the timber lease or license; but, for the present, the Lands Department does not attempt to do more than to open, as rapidly as possible, all of such lands as may be capable of cultivation. This, however, is but one of a number of suggestions that have received my attention.

"While the cry comes for the clearing of the wooded lands of the Coast and on Vancouver Island, the cry is equally as insistent for the draining of the water-covered lands on Graham Island, for the dyking of other lands, and for irrigation water for the lands of the Interior; while away to the North, in that great empire formed by the districts of Cariboo and Lillooet, the problem set is the securing of necessary water,

or the practical demonstration that it can be dispensed with through the application of the science of dry farming.

"These are all fairly large questions, Mr. Speaker, and while they have not as yet been solved, they will be grappled with and a satisfactory solution reached.

"In my opinion it would have been idle to have attempted to have dealt with them three or four years ago, when there was little, if any, demand for our lands, and it is premature to anticipate their solution even yet while so many thousand acres of desirable land, not affected by their solution, still await the settler.

SURVEYS THE FIRST REQUISITE

"In my opinion, the first requisite in attempting to deal with any land is the survey of it, and as I have explained to you, fifty per cent. of all the surveys that have been made in the Province have been made within the last four years. The demand for land by purchase forced the surveys, and, at the same time, furnished the money with which to carry them on; and while I do not wish to be considered pessimistic, I might venture the opinion that the finances of the Province four or five years ago would not have admitted of the survey of a fractional part of the lands now surveyed but for the proceeds from land sales.

"Changed conditions have made it possible to accomplish a great deal in the way of surveys, and a continuance of the expansion upon which we have entered will doubtless enable us to deal satisfactorily with all of the problems to which I have referred. Development when it sets in, follows fast.

"It may be that I will not have the privilege of carrying all, or any, of them through to their conclusion; but I will promise this, that I will at least have the honor of laying some stones in the foundation of British Columbia's agricultural development. There is abundance that can be undertaken even now in the way of preliminary work, and, to the limit of my ability it will receive my earnest consideration.

MAPS FOR PRE-EMPTORS

"What I regard as a commencement was made last year in the production of a pre-emptors' series of maps of those portions of the Province in which Government surveys had been carried on most extensively. By these maps it was rendered possible for the intending settler to ascertain readily where surveyed lands could be secured for pre-emption entry. Nothing of the kind had been previously attempted, and all information with respect to such

surveys as had been made were filed away in the records of the Department.

"Some three or four of these maps were published last year. As many more will be issued during the coming year. Having secured the maps, it was found that the information available for the settlers from the surveyors' field notes, except as to acreage and classification, was insufficient. To overcome this, I directed that descriptive reports should be filed by the surveyors of the lands surveyed by them, and these reports will be available this year as supplements to the maps referred to.

"Through the medium of the Water Branch, we accomplished a great deal, and the spirit of hostility manifested in a number of places, at what was at first considered an invasion of vested rights, has entirely disappeared, as the realization came that the conservation of the water was of first importance to successful agricultural development.

LANDS SUITABLE FOR DRY FARMING

"Another subject which was given some consideration during the past year was the possibility of the utilization of the immense areas in Cariboo and Lillooet, which, from lack of methods looking to the conservation of the rainfall and the great difficulty of obtaining water for irrigation have been counted as of little, if any, value. It was my pleasure, during the year, to make a trip through this part of the Province, in company with Professor Elliott, of the Natural Resources Department of the Canadian Pacific Railway, for the purpose of ascertaining the practicability of the science of dry land farming in those districts. That trip, let me say, sir, was an eye-opener.

"If Professor Elliott's conclusions can be accepted, and there are very few more competent authorities on dry land farming than he, then we have tens of thousands of acres in that portion of the Province, which, by the application of this principle, can be rendered productive. In making this statement, I am well within the mark, as dry land farming has passed the experimental stage, and not only have we the assurance of Professor Elliott that the conditions in Cariboo are much more favorable than in many portions of the United States, where dry farming is carried on profitably, but we have the practical illustration in the case of a number of pioneers who have already demonstrated, in a small way, what can be accomplished in our dry belt in this manner.

"In order that this subject may be further investigated, I hope to see provision made this year for carrying on further work, not alone with respect to dry land farming, but along the line

of prospecting for water, with possibly the sinking of a few wells by the Government, and the gathering of information which will be of assistance to private individuals who may be interested in securing water for their purposes.

AN EMPIRE IN THE NORTH

"We have an empire in the extreme north of the Province, and east of the Rocky Mountains, commonly known as the Peace River country. For the most part, this country is but sparsely settled, and it is a country which may be said to be the last West, so far as settlement is concerned. Very little is known about it, except in a general way, and this knowledge is confined to that portion to the extreme south of the territory of which I speak.

"It is the purpose of the Lands Department to place expert parties in that section of the country immediately, whose duty it will be to investigate, and make reports, so that such action may be taken by the Department in the way of administration as may be necessary. The country of which I speak, lying north of the Grand Trunk Pacific line, comprises, perhaps, one-third of the entire area of this Province, and our present information justifies us in the belief that, so far as its physical characteristics are concerned, it bears a great similarity to parts of the Province of Alberta, its immediate neighbor on the east.

"So far as its agricultural possibilities are concerned, we are not at the present time able to speak with any degree of assurance, as any information possessed with reference to that country is obtained from the cursory reports of private explorers and cruisers from time to time. The country in question is to a great extent under reserve so far as purchase applications are concerned; and, if it should develop that that territory can be made available for agricultural purposes, we have yet in our hands, and available for the homesteader, an area of land greater by far than has yet been alienated by both purchase and pre-emption.

"It is a matter of common knowledge that wheat grown at Fort Vermillion in the latitude of which I speak—but further east—took the world's prize at the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia as far back as 1876.

"In these few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I trust I have made it clear to the critics of the Government that the policy of the Lands Department does not begin and end in the conduct of sales of Crown lands of the Province, and the accounting for the proceeds of such sales. As a matter of fact, the sale of Crown lands is becoming of lesser importance each year.

LAND SALES BY AUCTION

"By extending the boundaries of existing reserves, land sales were depressed to a little over half a million acres during the past year, and a further shrinkage may be expected during the ensuing year; so that, in a very short time we may expect to see the private sale of Crown lands give place entirely to their sale at public auction, a system which has much to commend it, not only in the price which may be realized from the lands, but in the concentration of settlement, since land sales, however much they may be condemned, must result in land settlement if the purchasers of such lands are to recoup themselves for their investments.

"I have reviewed in detail some of the subjects which seem to loom large as outstanding problems to be solved, such as the reclamation of lands now covered by water, or subject to ebb and flow; the logging off of lands now covered by timber, and the conservation of moisture for dry land areas. As to the actual policy whereby the Government will undertake the work in a partnership capacity with the settler, this must be left for action in the more or less distant future.

"The amendments to the Land Act contained in the Bill which is now before the House contain the policy of this Government so far as it feels justified in acting at the present time. We think that, with the facilities placed before the settler contained within the four corners of this Bill, we are justified in asking him to continue, for the present at least, to work out his own salvation. We, however, as I have intimated to you, feel it is the function of the Government to follow up lines of experiments and to place any benefits that may accrue from these experiments in such a way as to be readily available by all the people of this country.

"I have outlined to you already a number of ways in which experiments may be carried on, and, in the light of experience gained in other parts of the world, of which we are entitled to, and will, take advantage, much may be done, and that as soon as practicable, which will enure to the benefit of all those who follow the calling of agriculture in its many forms. And, I believe, sir, that, with the influx of people of the right type which will result as a passing of this measure, very few years will elapse before the criticisms that have ever and anon been leveled at the administration upon the question of land settlement will entirely disappear, never to return.

EARNEST OF INTENTIONS

"In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I have to ask the members of this House to accept this Bill, not as the last word in the matter of land settlement we have so much at heart, but simply as an earnest of the intentions of the present administration to apply ourselves to each and every problem connected therewith. We have a Province that has been richly endowed in natural resources and climatic conditions. We are entitled to draw to it, as sons of adoption, the best peoples of the earth, who will assimilate with our own people; and who, following the long ribbons of steel as they are stretched from the East to the West, from North to South, in the opening up of our fertile lands, will co-operate with us in building up a Province which will measure up to the highest standard set by our most sanguine optimists."

